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II.—POETRY IN THE LIMBURGER CHRONIK.

I.

Travelling through the romantic valley of the Lahn, we meet about half way between Wetzlar and the Rhein the beautiful ancient city of Limburg. Situated in one of the most fertile parts of Germany, commonly called "der goldne Grund," and chiefly inhabited by a Catholic population, the city with its surroundings, especially during festive days, still bears a mediaeval appearance. Its cathedral, with an abbey founded in the tenth century, belongs to the master-works of the thirteenth century, and is said to contain the tomb of the German emperor, Conrad I, who died in 918. Limburg, however, has become still more celebrated in the history of German literature by reason of the chronicle which was written there in the latter part of the fourteenth century.

Not only containing numerous accounts of events which are of great value for the local history of the city and the bordering principalities, but also giving highly interesting descriptions of the costumes, as well as the manners and customs of the fourteenth century, of music and painting, and, above all, preserving many songs of that period, our chronicle must very early have enjoyed a great popularity, as we may see from the number of manuscripts in which it is preserved to us. When later, during the time of the Reformation and under the influence of the humanists, an interest in the study of German antiquities was awakened, a rich patrician of Frankfort-a-M., Johann Friedrich Faust, for the first time published it in 1617. Two years later a second edition was necessary. This edition, brought out under the unsuitable name of "Fasti Limburgenses," has, in spite of its many defects, until recently been the main source of information concerning the chronicle. The succeeding generation, having lost through the Thirty Years War its national self-consciousness, did not know how to appreciate the value of the book. One editor, in 1747, even complains: "dass der Historicus sich hie und dort mit Kleinigkeiten aufhalte, zum Exempel mit der Kleider-Mode, mit der Witterung, mit einfältigen Liedern."

The two great reformers of German literature, Lessing and Herder, with their keen eye for the poetical element and their deep historical predilections, again called attention to this important document of the fourteenth century. Thus we find in Lessing's posthumous works,¹ under the chapter *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur von den Minnesängern bis auf Luthern 1777*, numerous extracts from the chronicle, which he characterizes with the following words: "Es ist die älteste deutsche Chronik, so viel ich weiss, äusserst merkwürdig, weil sie so viele besondere Kleinigkeiten mitnimmt, dass sie auch fleissig der Lieder gedenkt, die jedes Jahr am meisten gesungen wurden, und sie also noch oft von mir wird angeführt werden müssen."

Herder's opinion of the value of the *Limburger Chronik* was so high that he intended to give long extracts from it at the beginning of the third book of his celebrated *Volkslieder*.² Seeing, however, that it would take too much space, he quotes only a few sentences from it, finally giving its whole title, and expressing the wish that some one else would make proper use of it. His advice has not been followed. While some collectors of popular poetry like Uhland, Erk, Böhme and others, inserted one or two of the songs into their collections, the fame of our chronicle really rested on a few scanty and, for the most part, erroneous remarks in our histories of German literature. The principal reason for this lack of attention may, perhaps, be found in the want of a critical edition; for, strange to say, until 1883 we had nothing but a careless reprint of the imperfect edition of Faust. We owe it to the diligent research of Arthur Wyss that we now possess an excellent edition of the chronicle in the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*. In his little treatise "*Die Limburger Chronik untersucht von Arthur Wyss*," he, for the first time, inquires into the relation of the different MSS, at the same time settling the question as to the authorship of our document. The results of his investigations being reinforced by fortunate discoveries, were afterwards embodied in his large edition just named.

An inquiry into the nature of the poetry contained in the *Limburger Chronik*, its origin, and its relation to former and later lyrics, may be justified by various reasons. While the student will perhaps welcome a handy collection of the songs interspersed in the *Chronik* which he now can only find in the insufficient form of Faust's text, made by a dilettante musician in the *Jahrbuch für*

¹ Lessing, ed. Lachmann, XI 463. ² Herder, ed. Suphan, XXV 320, 459.

musikalische Wissenschaft,¹ he will probably also wish for a critical text. For Arthur Wyss, in his laudable effort to give, by the aid of certain documents, the original form of the chronicle, has frequently, for the sake of a "normalisirte Text," reconstructed the language, not always to the advantage of the poems. The principal aim of this paper, however, will be to inquire whether the poetry in our chronicle is "Volkspoesie," or whether it belongs to the declining "Minnepoesie" or the rising "Meistergesang." A very interesting and lively discussion as to the age of lyrical Volkspoesie, which, of course, would also affect other forms of poetry, has recently been carried on, growing out of certain views of Wilmanns.² Starting from the fact that documents from the time before 1160 are wanting, he has denied the existence of any such poetry previous to that year. Burdach³ and Richard M. Meyer⁴ have tried to controvert this opinion by the use of various arguments, without appealing, however, to the songs in the Limburger Chronik. Now, could it be proved that the poetry which has been handed down to us in our chronicle was in no way influenced by the development of artistic lyrical poetry in the thirteenth century, could we further show that a close relation exists between the contents, the metrical forms, the poetical expressions, etc., of our songs and the beginnings of the Minnepoesie as represented in "Minnesangs Frühling" as well as in the Volkslieder of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, then I believe we shall be justified in drawing a conclusion as to the age of German Volkspoesie in general.

To this end it does not suffice that we have the assurance of the author of our Chronik: "item zu diser zit da sang und pfeif man dit lit overalle," or "in allen Duschen landen."

It is necessary to fix the position and character of the Limburger Chronik among similar documents of the time, and to ascertain, above all, whether its author probably composed the songs himself while in his poetical vanity he gave them the attribute of popularity.

The Chronicle of Limburg belongs to that class of historical literature which had a rich development at the close of the thirteenth and during the fourteenth century, owing to a deeper and more widespread interest in historical matters as it is found especially among the citizens of the great German cities.⁵ They

¹ I 115.

² Wilmanns, *Leben Walthers v. d. Vogelw.* 16.

³ *Zeitsch. f. d. A.* XXVII 343 ff.

⁴ *Ibid.* XXIX 121 ff.

⁵ Cf. O. Lorenz, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen im Mittelalter*. Wattenbach, *Geschichtsquellen*.

are not men of broad views and profound learning, like the historians in the times of the Hohenstaufen, who now try to supply the demand of readers. Recruiting their ranks mostly from the lower nobility, from the citizens and the clergy, they make it their chief object to be popular. And corresponding with the course of German politics, with the decline of imperial power and the rise of territorial interests, we find that most of these historical documents are local histories, chronicles of cities. At that time we scarcely meet with an attempt to write a general history of the world or to penetrate by deeper reasoning the course of historical events. But while they betray a charming naïveté in the absence of thoughts, these chroniclers cannot be called free from certain *motifs*. Historical legends, which to a great extent form the charm of the earlier historians, are almost entirely wanting, and whenever they are introduced, it is done, not with the naïve credulity of earlier centuries, but with the consciousness of an intention to produce certain effects. Being thus the representatives of a very prosaic view of the world, they did well to choose the form of prose for their productions, for they are intolerable as soon as they try to become poetical. But as writers of German prose, which assured them great popularity, they deserve a high place in the history of German literature. The great development of almost all poetical forms during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries scarcely left space for the use of prose as it had been cultivated in the latter part of the tenth century in the monastery of St. Gall. It was relegated to the position of the sole medium of expression of theological literature, for the popular form of sermons, or the more scientific writings which contain the philosophical speculations of the mystics. A close relation between the language of bodies of laws like the "*Sachsenspiegel*" and "*Schwabenspiegel*" may also be observed.

The gradual turning toward a more prosaic view of the world, the favored use of popular German prose, and the awakening interest in historical studies are principally due, however, to the two great orders, the Franciscans and Dominicans. It was only natural that the Church should start a movement of reaction against the spirit of a time which resembles very much that of the classical times of Lessing, Kant, Goethe and Schiller. Poetry which, to the middle of the eleventh century, had been cultivated almost exclusively by the clergy, had become an ethical power in the hands of knights and burghers. Their ideals were independent

of those of the Church, they preached religious tolerance, and in Walther von der Vogelweide the Pope had one of his most dangerous enemies. As the great mass of the German clergy had no influence upon their own people, the Pope in his reactionary efforts very prudently made use of those orders, whose original purpose was the conversion of heretics not only in South France but also in Germany. For here, too, the belief of the Church had been dangerously shaken, and stories of saints and miracles found no believers, according to a contemporary, unless the preacher added carefully the exact place and time where such miraculous occurrences had taken place. It seems that clerical astuteness speedily took this practical hint, and we soon see them collecting accounts of all kinds of events, historical and miraculous, thus producing an endless literature of more or less value. The Franciscans, who gave Germany some of its greatest preachers, made these collections mostly for practical homiletic use; they were the arsenals from which the monks took arms for attacking the gay, worldly life in the castles, the cities and the country. The Dominicans, on the other hand, who, from the beginning, show more scientific tendencies, manifest the same spirit in their treatment of history. The order which produced scholastics like Albertus Magnus, the celebrated teacher of Thomas Aquinas, of whom jealous Franciscans said, "*Albertus ex asino factus est philosophus et ex philosopho asinus*"—the same order created a rich historical literature bearing the character of compilations like many of their theological works. Like the Franciscans they either wrote themselves chronicles of cities, or persuaded others to do so. A brief sketch of the literary life and the tendencies of these orders was necessary in order to characterize the author of our chronicle, who, as we shall find, also belonged to the clergy.

Various accounts of the authorship of the Chronicle of Limburg were given by the different publishers, until Arthur Wyss, in his excellent little treatise, proved beyond doubt that it was written by Tilemann Elhem von Wolfhagen. From several documents recently reprinted in Wyss's large edition of our chronicle, it appears that Tilemann was town clerk of the city of Limburg from 1370-98. From the same source we learn that he belonged to the diocese of Treves. Wolfhagen, therefore, a village not far from Cassel, is evidently his native place, and he was born there probably about the year 1347; for, in chapter 13 of the chronicle, he says, "You shall know, everything that happened between 1347 and 1402 has

happened in my days, and I have through God's help seen it with my eyes and heard from my childhood until now." Although an ecclesiastic brought up in one of the monastic schools of Maintz, he calls himself in the barbarous Latin of his time *clericus uxoratus*, the name of his wife being Grede. It is evident, therefore, that he was not an ordained priest, but had changed his original calling to that of an imperial notary and town clerk of Limburg.

Much more than these few scanty notes upon his life, however, may be gained from Tilemann's work, in order to draw a picture of the man. Frequent quotations from Aristotle, Cato, the Corpus Juris and the Bible show that he was a man well trained in the scholastic learning of his time. His mention of Johannes Buridan (1327-50), the pupil of Occam and inventor of the "ass between two bundles of hay," probably serves to show that Tilemann, for a time at least, had studied under the great philosopher in Paris. Remembering the picture of the theological world of his time, the motives and efforts of the Dominicans and Franciscans, we must, however, say that Tilemann represents a great exception. While he shares their interest in the writing of history, while he still feels himself an ecclesiastic and condemns certain heretical movements as directed against the Church and the Pope, he does not share their fanatic hatred of poetry and worldly education. Nowhere in the chronicle do we find even a trace that he was led by theological motives or followed the tendencies of the other chroniclers, and only from a few passages can we infer that he consulted other historical sources.

He relates, according to his own confession, what he has seen and heard; the contents of the chronicle are, therefore, taken from life, and to this it owes its lasting charm. We hear not only of lesser or greater political events, but he tells us also of the weather in different years, the harvest, the quality of the wine, and of abnormal births. From him we learn of one of the first historical strikes, of social and religious movements; and to him we owe most valuable accounts of important paintings, as well as of the costumes not only of men but also of women—for he was a married man. His principal interest, however, seems to have been concentrated upon the arts of music and poetry. And while we may safely conclude that a man of such wide interests, that such a keen and faithful observer, can never have gone through the school of one of the fanatical orders above mentioned, but rather belongs to the old conservative class of ecclesiastics who joined

the knights and citizens in their gay, poetic life, we must still ask how it is possible to meet with such a unique personality in this century? Comparing other chronicles with a view to the poetry which they contain, we frequently find songs scattered here and there, but they are always chosen to serve some purpose of the author; they are introduced mostly as stylistic embellishments. Tilemann's collection, on the other hand, appears to have been made entirely for its own sake, and, furthermore, betrays so much intimate knowledge of poetry and music as an art that we cannot help supposing that its author was either an exceptionally highly educated amateur or a poet himself, probably belonging to the newly arising school of mastersingers. We know that in Maintz there existed one of the first of these schools, which showed, according to a contemporary (cf. Germ. XV 200), a decidedly conservative spirit, in opposition to the newly invented measures and melodies of other schools. Is it not possible that Tilemann, besides receiving his theological training in Maintz, may also have acquired the poetical education of that mastersinger school? A close examination of his style and of those poetical passages which doubtless belong to him, will perhaps give us a satisfactory answer.

It cannot be denied that Tilemann's style, although keeping within the typical forms of such chronicles, is remarkably German in its character, and free from the influence of Latin style which has continued to corrupt German prose down to our own time. The tranquillity of epic objectiveness is spread over the chronicle in general, and several descriptions of persons might find a place in any great epic poem. Relating the contest which the city of Limburg had with the Knight Cune, *i. e.* Konrad von Falkenstein, the protector of Maintz and Treves, he describes him in the following manner: "Item nu saltu wissen phyzonomien unde gestalt hern Conen vurgenant, want ich in dicke gesehen unde geprufet han in sime wesen unde in mancher siner manirunge. He was ein herlich stark man von libe unde wol gepersoniret unde gross von allem gelune, unde hatte ein gross heupt mit eime struben widem brunen krulle, ein breit antlitze mit pussenden backen, ein sharp menlich gesichte, einen bescheiden mont mit glefsen etzlicher masse dicke; die nase was breit, mit gerumeden naselochern, die nase was ime mitten nider gedruket; mit eime grossen kinne unde mit einer hohen stirne, unde hatte auch ein gross brost unde rodelfare under sinen augen, unde stont uf sinen beinen als ein lewe, unde hatte gutliche geberde gen sinen frunden, unde wanne dass he zornig was, so

pusseden unde floderten ime sine backen unde stonden ime herlichen unde wislichen unde nit obel."

While Tilemann shows in passages like this that he had certain poetical gifts, he does not betray the same faculty in his verses. The latter are, with one exception, translations of quotations from the Bible and ancient writers, and appear to be made according to the prescription, "Reim' dich oder ich fress' Dich." Thus he translates a sentence of Aristotle: "Amicus est consolativus amico visione et sermone: Ein frunt sal sime frunde trostlich sin unde dun dass mit rede und gesicht shin." Speaking of the locusts which appeared in Germany in 1362 and did great damage, he quotes the 46th verse of the LXXVII psalm, "Et dedit erugini fructus eorum et laborum eorum locustis," and translates: "Di rupen sollent ire fruchte leben, arbeit der lute ist den Haunschrecken gegeben."

Indeed, such verses may pass for the poetical pastime of an amateur who is trying his skill in hours of leisure, but nobody will find in them the traces of a poetical genius. And even at a more important occasion, when Tilemann evidently is so deeply agitated that he asks his readers to pray to God for him, and his local patriotism takes the form of poetry, his verses do not rise above the level of rhymed prose. The independence of Limburg had been at stake after the death of the princes of Limburg, and the Archbishop of Treves, in whose diocese the city was situated, came with many knights and soldiers in order to take possession. Before doing this, however, he called the city council together and asked them what rights and privileges the Archbishop might, in their opinion, claim. But instead of being frightened, the head of the council, the burgomaster Boppe, gave such sharp and legal answers that the Archbishop was astonished, and refrained from touching the independence of Limburg. Full of joy and just pride, Tilemann then writes the following lines:

"Daran gedenket, it jungen unde ir alden
dass ir mit wisheit moget behalden
uwer lip, gut unde ere
dass ist uwern kinden gute mere."

It would certainly be a charitable injustice towards Tilemann were we, after having examined the poetry which he claims as his own, to suspect him of having written any of the beautiful songs occurring in the latter part of the chronicle. There is every reason for believing that he is not the composer of any one of the songs

which he tells us were so popular, at various times, in Germany. Nor do passages in which he shows his knowledge of the technical language of the mastersingers prove, as we shall see later when we treat of the metrical peculiarities of these poems, that he must have practised the art of poetry to any further extent than that which has been indicated above.

Looking over the whole collection of poems contained in the Chronicle of Limburg, we may divide it into three different classes : (1) Poetry showing the influence of the declining Minnepoesie ; (2) Religious poetry ; (3) Popular songs.

There is only one poem in the chronicle which strictly belongs to the first class, and which bears the name of its author, Herr Reinhard von Westerbург.

This knight frequently appears in historical documents of that time, not only figuring in many of those fights in which the lesser knights constantly indulged, but also as a favored follower of Emperor Ludwig of Bavaria. He also must have enjoyed great fame as a poet, besides being a very jovial, witty and wild fellow. We possess a beautiful characterization of him by one of his contemporaries, contained in a poem of a MS of the fifteenth century, which was formerly in the possession of W. Grimm, and is now to be found in the Royal Library of Berlin (cf. *Zeitschrift f. d. A.* XIII 366 ff.). The author of this poem represents himself as walking in the woods, where he finds an elderly but still handsome lady. As she does not answer his greeting, he takes her by the hand, whereupon she tells him that thirty years ago she had founded a school for the purpose of teaching young knights the rules of honor and drawing them from the pool of disgrace. Tired of the great mass of knights, she had selected from their numbers twelve who had now developed into the bloom of knighthood and were ready to be dismissed, and she herself needed rest. Here the poet interrupts her, and proposes that she should continue her school. She asks him to name some knights whom she might take. This he does, but when mentioning Reinhard von Westerbург he cautiously adds, "He is a little wild and needs your training."

The story which Tilemann relates is entirely in accordance with this, and furnishes a delightful illustration of Reinhard's wildness. He says : "Item da man schreip dusent druhundert unde siben unde vierzig jar, da worden di von Cobelenze jemerlichen irslagen unde nider geworfen bi Grensauwe unde bliben ir doit hundert unde zwene unde sibenzig man unde worden ir auch darzu vil

gefangen unde dass det Reinhart, herre zu Westeburg. Unde der selbe Reinhart was gar ein kluger ritter von libe, von sinne unde von gestalt, unde reit keiser Ludewigen ser nach unde sang unde machte he dit lit :

‘ Ob ich durch si den hals zubreche,
wer reche mir den schaiden dan ?
so enhette ich nimans der mich reche ;
ich bin ein ungefrunter man.

Darumb so muss ich selber warten,
wi ez mir gelegen si.
Ich enhan nit trostes von der zarten,
si ist irs gemudes fri.
Wel si min nit, di werde reine,
so muss ich wol orlaup han.
Uf ir genade achte ich kleine,
sich, daz lasse ich si vurstan.’

Da der vurgenant keiser Ludewig daz lit gehorte, darumb so strafte he den herren von Westeburg unde saide, he wolde ez der frouwen gebessert haben. Da nam der herre von Westeburg eine kurze zit unde saide, he wolde den frauwen hesseren unde sang daz lit :

‘ In jammers noden ich gar vurdreven bin
durch ein wif so minnecliche,’ etc.

Da sprach Keiser Ludewig : ‘ Westeburg, du hast uns nu wol gebessert.’ ”

It is evident that Reinhard's poem belongs to that healthy opposition which seems to have begun even in the time of Walther v. d. Vogelweide, and which is generally called the decline of Minnepoesie. The conditions upon which the latter was based were too unnatural, the circles in which it moved too narrow, to assure it a longer life. For that sickly romantic admiration until recently prevailing in Germany and elsewhere, which saw in those knights the true representatives of *die gute, alte Zeit*, and adored them as the incarnation of *Zucht und Ehrbarkeit*, has fortunately passed away. While we fully acknowledge the beauties of many of their productions, we cannot help seeing in their constant groaning, whining and lamenting something extremely unknighly, especially as it was meant for married women, and had but one aim in view, the immorality of which cannot be denied, even if we call it, in Walther's elegant language, “halsen triuten bîgelegen.” The opposition, however, was not caused by such ethical considerations. Very soon the more sensible minds began to see the comical

element in the relation between knight and lady; above all, they began to feel that the fundamental idea upon which the whole nature of Minnepoesie rested was as unnatural as it was wrong. The idea that man is the servant of woman had not grown upon German soil, and in spite of all apparent flatteries, contained a very low conception of the woman, if we remember the real aim of this servitude.

It is very interesting to follow the development of the opposition, a history of which we do not yet possess. Very significantly, it is inaugurated by that poet in whom the sensual element of Minnepoesie reached its climax, and who afterwards became for this reason the hero of a popular legend, by Tannhäuser. He ridicules Minnepoesie by enumerating impossible things which the lady in whose "service" he is, required of him. And as he already praises the simple peasant girl whose love is won more easily than that of a lady in the higher circles, Neidhard von Reuenthal makes the villages near Vienna the scene of his love adventures, and while preserving the air of a minnesinger, brings about highly ludicrous situations. Their followers, Steinmar, Gottfried von Neifen and others go still further by scorning the unnatural feeling itself. Steinmar even compares the throbbing of his love-sick heart to the jumping of a pig in a bag (*Als ein swin in einem sacke vert mîn herze hin und dar*). But I have searched in vain in the minnesingers of that period to find a single example in which the poet addressed his ridicule to the lady herself as Reinhard von Westerburg does here. The ties of etiquette and tradition requiring the highest respect for the lady, were too strong yet, even at this late period, and it was because Tilemann felt them to be broken that he mentioned Reinhard's poem. This offence against tradition, which really meant the dissolution of the whole fabric on Minnepoetry, was felt still more keenly by the representative of conservatism, whose glory was based upon the splendor of knighthood by the emperor. For this reason he reprimands Reinhard, asking him to turn from his former course; and for this reason Reinhard assumes the old, worn-out, love-sick attitude of a minnesinger, behind which we can after all not help seeing the wild rogue.

Of the same importance which Reinhard's poem has for the history of Minnepoetry are Tilemann's accounts of the development of religious poetry. The same clear, observing mind which, either by instinctive interest or from scientific motives, noted a

most valuable turn in secular poetic art, has preserved us also an interesting source of knowledge in the field of sacred hymnology. Through Hoffmann von Fallersleben's diligent researches we know that the German church hymn is not entirely a new creation of Luther's.¹ Long before him the German spirit had revolted against the stupid inactivity with which Roman priests and the Roman liturgy had oppressed it. We can trace how the people, beginning with a few senseless vowels added to the strange *Kyrie eleison*, which they were allowed to sing, gradually created a German church hymn, much to the dislike of the Roman clergy. We owe it to the hate and persecutions of the latter that most of these songs were lost. The few which we still possess of the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, especially those addressed to the Virgin Mary, are filled with the deepest and most sublime religious feeling, and some songs which the people sang at Easter and Pentecost, such as "Christ ist erstanden" and "Komm, heiliger Geist," are still jewels of our present hymnals. Religious sects especially, as e. g. the mystics, which developed a highly spiritual life, cultivated religious poetry, and thus we find that the specimens preserved by Tilemann also belong to one of the religious movements of the fourteenth century. For, excepting the century of the Reformation, no other period was so deeply agitated by religion as the fourteenth century; and in many respects it may be compared to our present time. Not only do we find there the first beginning of great socialistic movements in Germany, but we also meet with the mania of our own time as well, the 'Antisemitentum,' the 'Judenhetze,' and even with the premonition of our Salvation Army, the Flagellants, among whom originated the songs of which we are about to treat.

Owing to the few and, for the most part, very imperfect and prejudiced sources of information afforded by contemporary writers, our knowledge of the whole movement is extremely limited. Although it has been proved by Haeser ("Lehrbuch der Gesch. der Medicin") and Hecker ("Die grossen Volkskrankheiten des Mittelalters") that this movement was caused by the so-called Black Death, mainly a disease of the lungs, which had been imported from Asia, and which swept through Europe from the Black Sea to Spain, devouring millions of people, we do not know its exact connection with the persecution of the Jews and

¹ Hoffmann von Fallersleben, Geschichte des deutschen Kirchenliedes bis auf Luthers Zeit.

the geographical route of the Flagellants. Recent investigation, however, has shown that the order of events which is usually accepted, viz., Black Death—Persecution of the Jews—Flagellants, has to be changed, for Germany at least, into Persecution of the Jews—Flagellants—Black Death.¹ The news of the approaching plague was a welcome pretext for getting rid of the Jews, who, as Roscher (“Ansichten der Volkswirtschaft”) has proved, were hated as the possessors of money and as public extortioners. Malice, stupidity and religious fanaticism manufactured the story that they had poisoned the wells, and in less than one year all the Jews scattered from Cologne to Austria were killed. The words ‘Judenmord,’ ‘Judenbrand,’ ‘Judenschlacht’ are technical terms in the chronicles, which find it quite natural that in Strassburg 2000 Jews were burned at one time *ad maiorem Dei gloriam*. One chronicler remarks (Diessenhofen) *crederem finem Hebreorum advenisse*, while another writer coolly concludes *requiescant in inferno* (Chronicum Lampetrinum). We have sufficient proof that the Flagellants, who appear simultaneously with these persecutions, frequently instigated them in the places at which they arrived with their processions.

Two great periods are to be distinguished in the history of this peculiar fanatical movement. Driven by an agonizing fear of the approaching death, which no human art or power could stay, superstitious people, seeing the wrath and judgment of God in the pest, organized in different parts of Germany a religious order composed of those who thought to be able to reconcile the wrath of God by punishing and torturing themselves. The impression which they created wherever they appeared was overpowering and heartrending, for a genuine religious enthusiasm seemed to break forth like a revelation from mysterious depths. As Tilemann reports, knights, citizens and peasants joined the new order. Closener, the chronicler of Strassburg, writes: “Whenever the Flagellants scourged themselves, then the greatest crowds assembled and the greatest weeping was to be witnessed, for they believed everything to be true.” And another writer, Hervord, says: *Cor lapideum esset quod talia sine lacrimis posset accipere*. It was in this first time, when they were welcomed everywhere and still filled with the spirit of repentance, that our hymns were composed.

Soon, however, we notice a great change in public opinion as

¹ R. Hoeniger, Der schwarze Tod in Deutschland.

well as among the Flagellants themselves. Notwithstanding all the praying, singing and scourging, the plague appeared and swept away millions and millions of people. We must not be surprised that the belief of the public was shaken, that it began to look upon the whole spectacle as a pious fraud. The Flagellants themselves seem to have felt their failing, and in order to preserve themselves they directed their agitation against the clergy, for they were sure this would not fail to make them popular. For a time it seems as if they had successfully calculated upon the public hatred of the depraved clergy. The movement assumes immense proportions; it spreads over all Germany; even women and children become Flagellants. Again they are seen to change their policy. Having filled their ranks with the outcasts of society, they begin to show socialistic and anarchical tendencies. Long before they had ceased to be an element of great ethical strength and influence. While in the earlier period their members had not dared to speak to women, a chronicler now writes: *transiverunt eciam in similibus turmis mulieres et virgines que, sicut audiui, nonnunquam plenis, salva reverencia, gremiis redierunt*, thus also foreshadowing the frequent elopements of our Salvation Army. They caused a second general persecution of the Jews; they entered and pillaged villages and cities, and finally threatened a complete overthrow of society. A final and radical change in public opinion now follows. Papal and imperial power unite for their destruction. In the same dry words with which the chroniclers spoke of the burning of the Jews they now relate the general slaughter of the Flagellants.

It is another proof of the impartiality of Tilemann that, although he shared the popular condemnation of the Flagellants, he has nevertheless written an accurate account of their first appearance.

We fortunately possess another description of the movement, entirely independent from Tilemann's, which not only verifies the statements of the latter, but will also assist us in obtaining a clear picture of all the ceremonies and processions accompanied by the singing of hymns. It was written by Fritsche (Friedrich) Closener, a contemporary of Tilemann living in Strassburg, and likewise an ecclesiastic and chronicler of his native city.¹ The Flagellants generally marched in troops consisting of one to three hundred members, who had pledged themselves, before entering the brother-

¹ Cf. Lorenz, *Geschichtsquellen*, p. 33; K. Hegel, *Die Chroniken der deutschen Städte*, Vol. 8, p. 3 (Einleitung).

hood, to observe strictly its regulations during the thirty to thirty-four days of the procession. As soon as they approached a city or a village they formed a line, following two by two the bearers of precious silk and velvet flags. They were clad in very plain clothes; upon their cloaks and hats red crosses were fastened. And while the church bells were rung to greet them, they marched to the church singing, according to Tilemann's version, the following song:

Ist dise bedefart so here
Crist fur selber zu Jherusalem
und furte ein cruze in siner hant.
Nu helf uns der heilant !

As Tilemann relates, the hymn had been composed for this special purpose, and was used in later times during the processions, "wanne man di heiligen treit." It has been preserved by Closener¹ in a more perfect form, and it is interesting to observe in this song, as well as in the others recorded by Closener, the constant changes which every genuine folksong has to undergo.

Nû ist die bettevert sô hêr
Crist reit selber gen Jherusalem ;
er fûrt ein krûtze an sîner hant.
nû helf uns der heilant !

Nû ist die bettevert sô guot.
hîlf uns, herre, durch dîn heiliges bluot,
daz du an dem krûtze vergossen hast,
und uns in dem ellende gelossen hast.

Nû ist die strôsze alsô breit
die uns zu unsere lieben frowen treit
in unsere lieben frowen lant.
nû helfe uns der heilant !

Wir sullent die busze an uns nemen,
daz wir gote deste bas gezemen
aldort in sines vatters rich.
des bitten wir dich sûnder alle gelich.
so bitten wir den vil heiligen Crist
der alle der welte gewaltig ist.

As soon as they had entered the church they kneeled down and sang:

Jhesus wart gelabet mit gallen
des sollen wir an sin cruze vallen. (Tilemann.)

¹ Cf. K. Hegel, *Chroniken*, VIII 105 ; L. Uhland, *Volkslieder*, II 824 ; W. Wackernagel, *Lesebuch*, I 1246.

Then they threw themselves on the ground, stretching out their arms in the form of a cross. In this position they remained until their precentor sang :

Nû heben tû die üwern hende
daz got dis grosze sterben wende. (Closener.)

After the first part of their exercises was thus ended, the inhabitants of the city or village invited them home and "büttentz in wol" (fed them). The principal performance, the scourging, generally took place twice a day either in a churchyard or in some large open place. Thither they marched in the same order in which they had entered the church, formed a circle, took off their shoes and uncovered the upper part of their bodies. Hereupon they lay down on the ground, indicating by their positions the different sins which they had committed. The adulterer, e. g. placed himself on his face, the murderer on his back, the perjurer held up three fingers, etc. One of the leaders, having stepped over one of the brothers as he lay on the ground, touched him with his whip and said :¹

Stant tû durch der reinen martel êre,
Und hüt dich vor der sünden mêre.

Thus he went through the whole circle, and whoever had been touched followed him in the same ceremony until all had risen. Now another circle was formed into which the precentors stepped, intoning the second long hymn, while the brothers two by two went around the circle scourging themselves until the blood flowed. In Tilemann's version the song begins thus :

Tredet herzu, wer bussen welle,
so flihen wir di heissen helle.
Lucifer ist bose geselle,
wen he hat,
mit beche er in labet.

This was evidently the most important hymn in these bloody exercises. In a more perfect, but still very corrupt form, we have it preserved not only by Closener, but also in a Low German version.² Almost the same thoughts and many similar expressions

¹ Cf. Closener, p. 107 ff.

² Cf. Ph. Wackernagel, *Das deutsche Kirchenlied*, II 336.

occur in a song of the French Flagellants,¹ which points to the international character of the movement as well as to a common source of the various forms of this hymn. After it had been sung the Flagellants again kneeled down and sang :

Jhesus wart gelabet mit gallen,
Des sollen wir an ein cruze fallen. (Tilemann.)

Again they threw themselves on the ground, remaining there for a while until the precentors began :

Nû hebent ûf die uwern hende,
das got dis grosze sterben wende.
Nû hebent ûf die uwern arme,
das sich got uber uns erbarme.
Jhêsus, durch diner namen drie,
Du mach uns, herre, vor sünden frie !
Jhêsus, durch dine wunden rô
Behüt uns vor dem gehen tô. (Closener.)

¹ Or, avant, entre nous tuit frère
Batons noz charvingues bien fort,
En remembrant la grant misère
De Dieu et sa piteuse mort,
Qui fut pris de la gent amère
Et vendus et trahi à tort :
Et battu sa char vierge et clère ;
Ou nom de ce, batons plus fort.

Loons Dieu et batons noz pis,
Et en la douce remembrance
De ce que tu feus abeuvrez
Avec le crueux cop de la lance,
D'aisil o fiel fut destramez.
Alons à genoux par penance ;
Loons Dieu, vos bras estandez ;
Et en l'amour de sa souffrance
Cheons jus en croix à tous lez.

Batons noz pis, batons no face.
Tendons noz bras, de grant vouloir
Dieux qui nous a fait, nous préface
Et nous doint de cieus le manoir.
Et gart tous ceulx qu'en ceste place
En pitié nous viennent veoir
Jhêsus ainsi comme devant.

—(Leroux de Lincy, Recueil de Chants histor. franc. I 233.)

Then they stretched out their arms in the form of a cross, and beating their breasts, sang :

Nû slaget uch sêre
durch Cristes êre.
Dorch Got so lasset di hoffart faren,
so wel sich Got ober uns irbarmen.

This last song, while not recorded by Closener, is given after Tilemann. It was doubtless used wherever the Flagellants appeared, since it is frequently mentioned by contemporary and later writers. Its Dutch version runs as follows :

Nu slaet u seer
door Christus eer
door God so laet die sonden meer.

An Austrian chronicle (1025-1282), which relates of the earliest Flagellants in 1260, mentions it in the following sentence : *Mulieres quoque in domibus simili modo faciendo, et illum cantum psallebant :*

Ir slaht iuch sêre
in cristes êre.
durch got sô lât die sünde mêre.

Hence it is highly probable that not only parts of songs, but whole hymns, and perhaps even many ceremonies, had been preserved by tradition for nearly a century. With the singing of the hymn just quoted the first part of these dramatic exercises closed. A second and third procession and scourging now followed, during which the continuation of "Tredet herzu, wer bussen welle" was sung.¹ The reading of a long letter which, as they pretended, had

¹ Maria stuont in grossen nöten
Do siu ir liebes kint sach toeten,
Ein swerte ir durch die sele sneit. (Cf. Stabat mater.)
Daz lo dir, sunder, wesen leit.
Des hilf uns lieber herre got,
des biten wir dich durch dinen tot.
Jhesus rief in hiemelriche
sinen engeln allen geliche,
er sprach zuo in vil senedeclichen :
die cristenheit wil mir entwichen,
des wil ich lan die welt zergan,
des wissent sicher, one wan.
dovor behüt uns, herre got,
des bitten wir dich durch dinen tot.

been sent from heaven by Christ, usually closed the services.

Maria bat irn sun den süssen :
 liebes kint, lo sū dir büssen
 so wil ich schicken, daz sū müssen
 beseren sich. des bit ich dich,
 vil liebes kint, des gewer du mich.
 des bitten wir sunder ouch alle gelich
 Welich frowe oder man ire e nuo brechen
 daz wil got selber an si rechen :
 swebel, bech und ouch die gallen
 güsset der tüfel in sie alle.
 Furwar sie sint des duvels bot.
 dovor behüt uns, herre got,
 des bitten wir dich durch dinen tot.
 Ir mordere, ir strosroubere,
 uch ist die rede enteil zuo swere,
 ir wellent uch uber nieman erbarn,
 des mussent ir in die helle varn.
 dovor behüt uns, herre got,
 des bitten wir dich durch dinen tot.
 O we, ir armen wuocherere,
 dem lieben got sint ir unmere.
 du lihest ein marg al umbe pfunt,
 daz zühet dich in der helle grunt,
 des bistu iemer me verlorn,
 derzuo so bringet dich gottes zorn
 dovor behüt uns, etc.
 Die erde erbidemet, sich klü bent die steine
 ir herten hertzen, ir sullent weinen,
 weinent tongen—mit den ougen.
 schlahent uch sere—durch Cristes ere.
 durch (in) vergiessen wir unser bluot,
 daz si uns fur die sünde guot.
 daz hilf uns lieber herre got, etc.
 Der den fritag nüt envastet
 und den sūntag nüt enrastet,
 zwar der müsse in der helle pin
 eweklich verloren sin.
 dovor behüt uns, etc.
 Die e, die ist ein reines leben,
 die hat got selber uns gegeben.
 ich rat frowen und ir mannen,
 daz ir die hochfart lasset dannen.
 durch got so laut die hochfart varn,
 so wil sich got uber uns erbarn.
 des hilf uns, etc.

Tilemann, finally, has preserved us the first strophes of two hymns which they intoned on leaving the cities and villages :

O herre vader Jhêsu Christ,
want du ein herre alleine bist,
der uns die sunde mach vurgeben,
un gefriste uns, herre, âf besser leben,
das wir beweinen dinen dôt!
Wir klagen dir, herre alle unse nôt, etc.

Or :

Ez ging sich unse frauwe, kyrieleison,
des morgens in dem dauwe, alleluia.
Gelobet sî Maria!
Da begente ir ein junge, kyrieleison,
sîn bart war ime entsprungen, alleluia.
Gelobet sî Maria! etc.

It was necessary to give a full description of the ceremonies and songs of the Flagellants, in order to illustrate the manner in which Tilemann recorded poetry in his chronicle. Comparing his account with that of Closener and other sources, it will be observed that, although Closener has a more complete text, Tilemann has noted several songs of essential importance for the understanding of the Flagellant movement, which do not occur in Closener. The reason why Tilemann usually does not report more than one strophe of the various hymns is to be found in the fact that they are of interest to him only as newly arisen forms of metrical and musical production. Several times he takes occasion to emphasize that the hymns or "leisen" (kyrieleison), as he calls them, had been composed at this time (der leise ward da gemachet) or belonged exclusively to the Flagellants (ire leisen). Finally, he says: "item du salt wissen, daz dise vurgeschreiben leisen alle worden gemachet unde gedicht in der geiselnfart, unde enwas der leisen keine vur gehort." Although Tilemann is mistaken here in regard to the verses "Nu slaget uch sere," which were known as early as 1260, his remark characterizes the manner in which he observed newly arising poetical phenomena. His treatment of these religious hymns will, of course, help to throw light on his account of the remaining popular poetry, as we shall find later. An investigation as to the common source of all the Flagellant poetry is not undertaken in this paper. It is highly probable, however, that it is to be found in Italy, where we meet with the earliest indications of the Flagellant movement in 1260; and that,

following the geographical route of the order, it became by translation and tradition the basis of the Flagellant poetry in the various countries.¹

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¹A proof for the latter supposition may be found in a passage from a chronicle quoted by Hoffmann, *Gesch. des d. Kirchenlieds*, p. 132 (*Chronicon Pulkavae*, *Monum. hist. Boem. T. III*, p. 232): *Eodem anno flagellatorum quaedam secta suboritur, qui velantes capita more claustralium ad cingulum denudati flagellis in extremitatibus nodos habentibus, fortissime se caedebant, quorum etiam quidam processiones, stationes, venias et genuflexiones fecerunt mirabiles, secundum distinctiones linguarum cantantes.*